

REL Mid-Atlantic Teacher Effectiveness Webinar Series

Induction and Mentoring of New Teachers

Q&A with Ellen Moir

April 25, 2013

In this webinar, Ellen Moir, CEO and founder of the New Teacher Center, shared research that shows evidence of the effectiveness of the NTC induction model in raising student achievement and its potential for reducing teacher attrition (Moir, 2009). This Q&A addressed the questions participants had for Ellen Moir following the webinar. The [webinar recording](#) and [PowerPoint presentation](#) are also available.

Structuring the Mentoring System

- 1. When do you pair up your protégés and mentors? I would like to do it before the first day of school; however, we don't know who would like to be a mentor because we are not sure how many new teachers we have. We want our mentors to be trained, and to ask them to come to a training without guaranteeing them they will have a protégé is difficult.**

Before the school year begins is best, if possible. However, in some districts that the New Teacher Center (NTC) works with, mentors first meet with their mentees after the school year starts, and the mentees still benefit tremendously from working with their mentors.

- 2. What is the best way to arrange for prolonged mentoring, if necessary?**

NTC's model advocates for two years of mentoring for beginning teachers and beginning principals by full released, expert educators. There is no one best way to build infrastructure at a school, district, or state level to allow for this comprehensive induction approach. There are, instead, many high-quality options for looking at existing resources and needs. Helping with induction program design and implementation is part of a core service that NTC provides to its partners.

- 3. How important is it to have specified times for a mentor and mentee to meet?**

NTC recommends fully releasing mentors from their classroom duties so that they can give their full attention to their mentees. NTC also suggests that mentees and mentors have regular, sanctioned time to meet, which includes time in class for the mentor to observe teaching and learning. New teachers in NTC programs report that when they have a sanctioned, regular meeting time with their mentors, their teaching practice improves more than when they do not have sanctioned time.

- 4. How many times should a mentor meet with a new teacher every week?**

NTC recommends that mentors meet with their new teachers at least 90 minutes per week.

- 5. What type of delivery system or schedule to begin the school year do you find most effective in delivering information to new teachers? I struggle with all the things that they need to know up front vs. their ability to digest all that information at one time. Any suggestions?**

NTC's model is based on adult learning principles, which allow for time to digest and experiment in between learning new content. By using a cycle of inquiry and a continuous improvement mindset, new teachers learn new content, try it out, and reflect on how it went throughout their first years (and ultimately, throughout their careers as teachers), which allows them to grow without being overwhelmed up front.

6. How do you get principals to buy in?

NTC believes the role of the principal and other instructional leaders is essential in supporting high-quality teacher development and works closely with these leaders both through structured professional development and through informal, facilitated conversations with the mentee and mentor.

7. If you don't have a large [enough] turnover to have a mentor teacher in each building, can there be a mentor that shares, for example, two schools? I guess my question is more about say you only have ten new teachers across seven schools and one school may only have one new teacher. Is the idea to have a mentor for each school even though the one school has one new teacher?

Mentors can work with teachers across multiple schools.

8. The inquiry cycle looks engaging. Will you go more in depth into developing habits of teacher inquiry/reflection?

A key component of NTC's model is helping mentors and teachers internalize an inquiry stance and approach to their work. Mentors work with teachers to develop inquiring/reflective habits of mind in several ways. One is through their consistent, intentional use of mentoring language. Skilled mentors use language that paraphrases, reflects, and extends the teacher's thinking. For example, when a mentor and teacher are debriefing an observation together, mentor language "stems" would include phrases like: *Tell me more about..., What evidence supports this idea? What might it look like if...? What might you adjust going forward?*

NTC's Formative Assessment and Support tools are strategically designed to develop teachers' habits of inquiry and reflection. The *Collaborative Assessment Log* is used for frequent assessment of and reflection on a teacher's current success, challenge, and next step. *Analysis of Student Work* provides a guiding framework for analyzing student learning and then planning differentiated instruction. The *Inquiry Cycle Action Plan* supports a formal inquiry into the impact of one's practice on student learning. Together, mentors and teachers complete a "pre-instruction" analysis of student work, create an inquiry question designed to answer a problem of practice identified through the analysis, and co-plan a lesson or series of lessons related to the inquiry question. The mentor observes the lesson(s) and shares and analyzes the observation data with the new teacher. Finally, a "post-instruction" analysis of student work is done, allowing the beginning teacher to reflect on and analyze the impact of his or her inquiry and instruction on student learning. The power of experiencing the inquiry cycle is that teachers realize that every instructional decision they make has an implication for student learning, and the best way to make sound instructional decisions is to reflect on and analyze what worked, what didn't, and what to adjust. As teachers develop, they begin to internalize these habits of mind and are better able to adjust instruction "in the moment" to meet students' learning needs.

9. Could you go into more detail about the ways the NTC is currently leveraging technology and online tools in the mentoring process?

Here is more information about NTC's online model:

<http://www.newteachercenter.org/services/ems>

10. Do you use a different approach with teachers of Career and Technical Education who come out of industry sometimes after 20 years?

Mentoring is intentionally differentiated for each mentee. The role of the mentor is to work individually with the mentee to determine existing strengths, set goals, and support formative, ongoing development of practice.

11. How do you overcome challenges of reaching a tipping point in relation to building capacity in mentor skills?

NTC advocates for mentors to rotate out of the position every three years in order to allow the mentor enough time to really build their skills around high-quality teacher development, to continually build the capacity of many teacher leaders throughout a district, and to avoid stagnancy in the position. We do not believe the role of mentor should be a permanent position.

Identifying and Training Mentors

12. Has NTC had any conversations with national associations for alternative certification?

Yes, NTC has supported programs either through universities and colleges or through alternative certification partners that support teachers entering the profession through alternative certification pathways.

13. Is there a program or guidelines you use to recruit mentor teachers...you mentioned that mentors should have excellent interpersonal skills...some of our new teachers dread it when it's time for their teacher coach to visit.

NTC works closely with our district/state partners around mentor recruitment and selection and has protocols to support these critical decisions. We advocate for a combination of demonstrated excellence in teaching as well as prior experience with developing teacher leaders.

14. How is the mentor role defined within the context of a contract with the union?

This varies by district and/or state. Some have this role well defined, and some do not explicitly address a definition. NTC believes in a collaborative relationship between its partners and their respective associations.

15. What are the criteria for the mentor teachers? Are there recommendations and are they created by the district?

Please see the answers to question 13 and 14.

Mentors and Teacher Evaluation

16. A question based on system needs—I taught in DCPS. They use a “master educator” to evaluate teachers under the idea that they would give us feedback to improve our practice, but it felt more like evaluation, not mentorship. How do you make sure to tease apart evaluation from mentorship? Does the NTC model remove teacher evaluation from mentorship?

NTC's model is successful because its mentors are able to build a strong, trusting relationship with their mentees. In many districts where we work, the mentoring program for new teachers is separate from the formal evaluation program. In all cases, NTC's mentors are focusing on providing feedback and helping their mentees use that feedback to grow.

17. What are your thoughts on models that use observations by outside “master educators” (such as DC Public Schools) as a method of teacher evaluation? Is it, in your opinion, effective?

The most effective teacher evaluation models tie evaluation feedback to a path for growth. NTC also believes in multiple measures of assessing teacher practice. Even though districts have different ways of assessing their new teachers, the important thing is that the teachers can ultimately use that feedback to grow.

18. In Maryland we are implementing Student Learning Outcomes as part of teacher evaluation. What suggestions do you have for creating SLOs for mentor teachers?

I would suggest following a structure and path similar to what you are probably using for Student Learning Objectives.

First, narrow the outcomes. Professional teaching standards vary by state. They are often comprehensive but tend to have many “sub-elements”—sometimes too many to use for purposes of focused assessment, support, and feedback, particularly for novice teachers. So, narrowing the number is a good first step and can be done strategically by aligning with your site or district initiatives.

Second, define and develop a *shared definition and understanding* of the outcomes. This is an important and often overlooked step. What does this outcome or standard element look like in practice? What does it sound like? If possible, arrange for a collective analysis of teaching artifacts (including observation of practice and a review of artifacts such as lesson plans or student work), and work towards a calibrated agreement of what it means to meet the outcome or standard element.

Third, set up a timeline and protocol for assessing progress. Ideally, the same outcomes will be assessed at the beginning, middle, and end of the year using an appropriate assessment tool or rubric. The protocol should include a process for triangulating assessment data. Just relying on observation data, or just on lesson plans, doesn’t provide a full picture of practice. In NTC’s model, we use our *Continuum of Teaching Practice*, which is a tool for assessing teaching practice in seven areas (what we define as our Core Teaching Capabilities). In our model, the mentor and beginning teacher co-assess the beginning teacher’s practice using multiple data sets and the *Continuum of Teaching Practice*. Strengths and areas for growth are tracked, summarized, and revisited over time. The most important piece in all of this, of course, is to use the assessment information to inform and improve the next steps in teaching and mentoring.

Miscellaneous

19. My dissertation is focusing on the mentoring relationships between students and faculty. My question is why do some students receive more mentoring than others?

Mentoring assignments are often made at the school or district level, so the reasons may lie in that level of administration.

20. Are there any forums for mentor teachers to continue dialogue?

NTC's model builds in regular—either weekly or biweekly—Mentor Forums as a critical component of the mentors' training. In Mentor Forums, the mentors come together to reflect on their own practice, focusing on artifacts that they bring related to the growth of their new teachers' students.

REL Mid-Atlantic is developing a Forum feature for its website, so webinar attendees will be able to start discussion threads and continue their conversations. We expect to have that available in the coming weeks, and will email all attendees of the Teacher Induction and Mentoring webinar when the forum is ready. We will also make an announcement in the REL Mid-Atlantic newsletter. Keep an eye out for it!